

# COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP ON HEALTH



## Press Statement

Date: 30 April 2018

### **Consultations were crucial before legalizing marijuana**

The Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) would like to express grave concern over government's failure to hold public consultations before legalizing mbanje or cannabis (marijuana) at a time the country is grappling with the problem of drug abuse, especially among the youth. While the organisation does not doubt or discredit the medicinal benefits associated with cannabis, it is the lack of consultations and the social destruction that is likely to occur in the long-term that worries us most.

The government last week gazetted a \$50 000 licence fee for people wishing to produce cannabis and cut prison terms for those caught illegally dealing in the substance. It should be highlighted that Zimbabwe is already grappling with the problem of drug abuse, with the youth taking all sorts of substances including mental health tablets (blue tablets) glue, musombodhiya (strong alcoholic drink), bronclear (bronco), alcohol and cocaine just to get high. By legalizing, the government is creating a bigger national problem that far outweighs both the medicinal and economic benefits of the substance to the nation. The societal destruction will be unfathomable while the cost of rehabilitating thousands of people will be unbearable to a government already struggling to fund its health sector.

We feel it is contemptuous of the highest order for the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC) to legalise the production of cannabis without consulting the communities that would bear the effects of the move. It would have been proper for such an important national policy to be brought before Parliament to deliberate on its merits and de-merits on society than just imposing it.

The government must have carried out thorough research in countries where cannabis is legalized. By legalizing the substance, the government has put the country on the spotlight for the wrong reasons. Zimbabweans wishing to travel to international destinations will be subjected to unnecessary scrutiny, suspicion, searches and monitoring just like the drug barons/mules from the opium producing countries. We are taking "Zimbabwe is open for business" too far.

The high licence fees of \$50 000 to produce marijuana entails that it is only the rich commercial farmers that will be able to venture into this seemingly lucrative business sidelining the small-scale and communal farmers. The structure of the fees excludes the poor communal farmers meaning that issues of equity were not even considered when this policy was adopted.

CWGH, as a community-based organisation that promotes community participation in health, puts strong emphasis on community engagement and involvement in decisions that affect the welfare of communities in general.

---

**Itai Rusike (Mr)**

Executive Director

**Community Working Group on Health (CWGH)**

4 O'connor Crescent, Cranborne, Eastlea, Harare, Zimbabwe

Mobile: +263 77236 3991

Tel: +26-4-573285|573286

Email: [itai@cwgh.co.zw](mailto:itai@cwgh.co.zw)

Website: [www.cwgh.co.zw](http://www.cwgh.co.zw)

"Health is Your Right and Responsibility"